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THE CHINESE QUESTION.

A Paper read before the Berkeley Club,

by JOHN H. BOALT,

August, 1877.

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THE CHINESE QUESTION.

Two Non-Assimilating Races Never Yet Lived Together Harmoniously on the Same Soil Unless One of these Races was in a State of Servitude to the Other.

I do not think that in the whole history of the world from the earliest ages down to the present day one single instance can be cited where this proposition has proved untrue. Of course since there are degrees in assimilation there are degrees in the antagonism caused by non-assimilation; and there may have been cases where this antagonism was less than in other cases. There may even have been cases where it has in time finally died out, but never, as far as I have been able to discover, has the antagonism ceased until the cause was removed, and in every instance the extent of the one has borne a definite proportion to the degree of the other.

By the assimilation of two races is meant, the bringing or coming together of the individual members of these races in such intimate association that there ceases to be any race separation between them, and the two finally become blended into one nation. It is the breaking down of all barriers of race and color and education and prejudice, the identification of interests, the acceptance of the same laws, the adoption of the same customs, and, in short, the admission of absolute equality as far as race is concerned, by all, for all, and among all, politically, morally and socially.

Without intimate social relations assimilation is impossible. The identity of business interests which has done and is doing so much else is powerless here. The Hebrews of Rome never became Italians; the Greeks of Constantinople never became Turks. But a drouth in Turkey injured the Greek as much as the Ottoman; and a season of plenty in Italy was as welcome to the Jew as the Gentile.

Assimilation is never complete until intermarriage is so frequent as no longer to excite comment. But this must be honorable marriage, and not concubinage, for marriage is evidence of respect as signifying a union with an equal, while concubinage is an indication of contempt, and has always been the unfailing companion of slavery.

It might perhaps be admitted that there never were on the face of the globe two races so utterly dissimilar and divergent that, if sufficient time and favorable occasion were given, they would not ultimately assimilate and coalesce; provided always that one of them did not exterminate the other before these soothing influences had had the opportunity to produce their effect. But when we recall how many centuries it required to assimilate and coalesce the Normans and Saxons, two nations of comparatively very slight divergence; when we recall the wars, the feuds, the dissensions, the barbarities, brutalities and suffering which England underwent before this process of fraternization was completed, it would certainly seem that in an extreme case of divergence as between extermination and this kind of reconciliation, the former were the more agreeable alternative.

It hardly seems necessary to seriously discuss the proposition that internal harmony is essential to a nation's prosperity and perpetuity. The problems of government are sufficiently vast and varied already, without adding to them this most difficult of all the tasks of statesmanship, the reconciliation of conflicting elements at home. The disintegration of empires has almost invariably followed the lines of non-assimilation, and no wise statesman would unnecessarily increase them.

We now come to the consideration of the causes of non-assimilation. This is not the proper place to discuss the question as to what have been the influences of country, climate, temperature, etc., etc., in separating men into different races, nor do I care now to enter into any examination as to how far the existing and differing types may be considered as the result of evolution from a common germ under different conditions of environment. Assuming this to be the case, however, it might be that some of these varying types have now reached a point of development

where the distance from the mother germ has become so great, and the individuality of the different types has become so distinct, that assimilation between them is now impossible, just as it has become impossible to graft one distinct fruit upon another and procure an enduring progeny.

I propose rather to restrict myself to the mention of a few of the more prominent causes of non-asssimilation, selecting those whose workings are familiar to us all, either as matter of history or as well-known existing influences. First in order are:

1. Physical Peculiarities.—Why it is that certain peculiarities of face, form, and color attract us, while others repel, is a problem far too deep for this paper. It is enough that the fact exists; and its importance in this connection will be appreciated when we remember that assimilation is impossible without intimate and cordial social relations between the differing races, and frequent inter-marriage between their members.

Again, these physical peculiarities tend to make other and less important divergencies conspicuous, and in this and other ways are constantly operating to isolate the race possessing them from all other races. I am inclined to think that physical peculiarities which now pass unnoticed might, if a prejudice were aroused against them, ultimately result in the separation and isolation of new races and septs now unknown. For example, suppose that red-headed men were rigidly excluded from general society, and compelled to consort together; the result would be, that in a few generations we should have a red-headed sept. The auburn tinge would gradually disappear from our heads, while it would grow more and more pronounced on theirs, until, after aeons of ages, it might be, or at least it might be believed, that there were mental as well as physical differences between us.

Upon the whole, I doubt if there is any obstacle in the way of the fraternization of races so difficult to overcome as this one of physical peculiarities, and the prejudices, sometimes very idle and senseless, which are begotten of them. These marked differences in color and physiognomy will remain forever, unless gradually modified and softened down by the slow process of amalgamatiou. But there can be no amalgamation worth con-

sidering as long as the presence of these very peculiarities excites repulsion. So there would seem to be a dead lock.

2. Intellectual Differences and Differences of Temperament. Precisely how much of these is to be referred to congenital peculiarities, and how much to education and circumstances of environment, it is, of course, difficult to determine. We say the Englishman is remarkable for his solidity, the Frenchman for his vivacity; that the German is thoughtful but lymphatic, the Spaniard grave but courteous; but how much of this is fancy and how much has a solid foundation, is a question hardly worthy enquiring into now. So much, however, is at least clear, that there are certain national peculiarities of disposition and habits of thought in the different races which exert a powerful influence in keeping them separate. It is true that history shows that these influences have generally lost their power after generations of contact and association. A civilized race will not assimilate with a barbarian race; but it may civilize the barbarian first, and assimilate with him afterwards.

Another interesting feature in this connection is, that in order to establish a complete sympathy between the members of different races, they must unite on the same ideal standard of excellence. It is not enough that the one imitates the other, for he may imitate without respect, or assume a resemblance for purposes of self interest. We are all struggling more or less earnestly toward an ideal. Our ideas of right and wrong are based on our conceptions of what our ideal would consider right or wrong. Of course we are but caricatures of that ideal. But whenever we meet with those whose standard is substantially the same as our own, we find that our aims are constantly converging. There is a subtle sympathy established between us, which enables us to unconsciously understand each other. I think, therefore, that this identity of ideal standards is one of the most powerful agents of conciliation. Men who worship the same heroes, and cherish the same aspirations, must, sooner or later, find themselves on the same plane.

Another important cause of non-assimilation is :

3. Differences in Language.

To these may be added differences in customs, dress, social peculiarities, local prejudices, and the like, all of which exert more or less influence in keeping up the separation of the races. That these differences may be gradually overcome by time and contact is, of course, true. But it may be worth while to remember that, after centuries of association, there still remains the old and apparently irrepressible conflict between the Indo-Germanic and the Sclavonic Races within the Empire of Austria.

Another, and common cause of non-assimilation, is :

4. Hatred Engendered by Conquest, or by Clashing of National or Race Interests.—Examples of race antipathies from this cause will readily suggest themselves. From the very nature of the cause the antagonism created by it will naturally grow less with succeeding generations ; and instances are not wanting where it has finally died out altogether. But no species of national or race antagonism is so dangerous, so desperate, or so prolific of dissension and bloodshed while it lasts.

A fifth cause of non-assimilation is :

5. Religious Fanaticism.—No better evidence can be given of the power of this influence in keeping races separate than the fact that, in several instances, it has been able to reconcile races otherwise antagonistic. Next to physical peculiarities, it is probably the strongest of all the agencies we have so far considered. It would seem that it is not essential that a nation should be united in favor of a creed, as were the Mahomedans ; the same force is operating when the nation is united against a religion, as were the Chinese. The impossibility of assimilation, when this powerful force is working against it, may be seen today in British India. It is idle to expect fraternization among men of different races when one considers the bare touch of the other as an ineffaceable profanation.

Having now briefly considered some of the causes of non-assimilation, we can better understand the bitter antagonism which it has called forth.

Even if historical examples were wholly wanting, it seems to me that the principle might be deduced a priori; for the world is full of individual antagonisms. The struggle for existence, the competition for the prizes of life, is continually impinging us one upon the other. The baser passions of our nature, envy, jealousy, covetousness, hatred, are constantly stimulated by our own failures or our neighbor's successes. I can hardly be expected to look with equanimity upon my rival who has won, or rest complacently in the consciousness that I have lost. But these individual repulsions are largely counteracted by individual attractions. I do not love my competitor; but his brother is my friend, or his sister is my sweetheart. This man has done me a grievous wrong; but I condone his fault, not out of regard for him, but out of pity for his family, out of sympathy for his relatives. Thus do the ramifications of our social system protect us one against the other, and unite us with a bond elastic but strong, invisible but all-pervading.

But race antagonisms have no such counteracting influences. On the contrary, we are prone to generalize the fault of the individual culprit, and attach its stigma to the whole nation to which he belongs. A Chinese servant runs off with my spoons; I hasten to vociferate that all Chinamen will steal. An Indian horse-trader tells me a falsehood; I feel safe to say that no Indian ever told the truth. Worse than this, the sin committed against me is taken up by my race as a sin committed against our whole family, and individual crimes are thus catalogued into national grievances. This sort of race hostility is materially strengthened by a large class of men who find their principal scope for activity in keeping alive race feeling and fostering race enmities. It is a curious fact, that there are many men who are never so happy as when they can merge their own personalities in a great aggregate. They prefer to be fractions of a large integer rather than independent individual units. Thus I have known people who should be reckoned as Masons rather than as men, as Odd Fellows rather than as individuals. I have known others who were so completely absorbed and lost in a church that scarcely

the "nominis umbra" remained. To them the community is everything, the individual is nothing. Insult them and you may be forgiven, but insult their sept and you have committed an unpardonable sin. Lost in such a generalization, they become morbidly sensitive as to the community's honor, fretfully irritable as to its grievances, and inordinately jealous of its rivals or competitors. For such small cattle, they are capable of a great deal of harm.

I may now re-state the proposition with which I began and give it place as the major premise of my argument.

Two non-assimilating races cannot live together harmoniously on the same soil unless one be in a state of servitude to the other.

It is not necessary to say that slavery is in this country no longer possible.

We are now ready for the minor premise:

The Caucasian and Mongolian races are non-assimilating races.

For, first, they are separated by physical peculiarities of the most marked and distinctive character. The Chinaman differs from us in color, in features and in size. His contact excites in us, or at least in most of us, an unconquerable repulsion which it seems to me must ever prevent any intimate association or miscegenation of the races. To this must be added that the difference in physical peculiarities makes the more conspicuous the many and radical divergencies which otherwise exist.

Second, the two races are also separated by a remarkable divergence in intellectual character and disposition. Our habits of thought are so entirely different that it seems impossible that they should ever become reconciled.

Of the European immigration which comes, to us the Indo-Germanic races and even the Sclavonic races may be said to have in general about the same ideal standard of excellence as our own. As a consequence we have found that they readily assimilate with us and their national peculiarities and race distinctions soon die out and in a generation or two they become completely Americanized. But as far as we can judge, the ideal standard of

The Chinaman is constructed on an entirely different plan. His notions of right and wrong are in many respects totally unlike ours. His views in regard to the treatment of women are utterly repugnant to us. His heartlessness and inhumanity toward the infirm, the feeble and afflicted of his own race shock every sensibility of our nature. He is generally honest, it is true, but the most prominent Chinese merchant in San Francisco admitted that his race was honest simply because it was the best policy and for no other reason. Now a man who is honest from the mere force of logic, simply because honesty is generally the best policy, must inevitably be dishonest in the exceptional case when dishonesty is the best policy.

The two races are further separated by fundamental differences in language, in dress, in customs, in habits and social peculiarities and prejudices. In all these respects the Chinese differ from us more than any known race. Even their virtues are not the same as ours. While they are as a nation more apprehensive of danger than we and more selfish and cowardly in avoiding it, in the presence of death they display a rare intrepidity and yield up their lives with a courage which we should consider heroic in one of ourselves. They excel us in industry and economy but they are even more reckless and prodigal when they choose to indulge themselves. Those of their amusements which are innocent seem to us puerile; those which are vicious are even more vicious and degrading than our own.

It is notorious that women and children are regularly bought and sold in the Chinese quarter of San Francisco to-day, and that young girls are systematically imported from China, and held in slavery for purposes of prostitution, within calling distance of the City Hall.

A formal contract upon red paper, in which a young Chinese girl was bound to serve *with her body* a certain Chinese procuress for a term of years, was some time ago introduced in evidence in one of our Courts of justice, and having been first proved and authenticated, it was translated under oath by the Rev. Otis Gibson, and is now in the hands of the Hon. Horace F. Page, at Washington. By the terms of this instrument, this girl was

indentured to serve as a prostitute, just as formally and with as much precision and straightforwardness of language as we might use in apprenticing a girl to a milliner, and careful provision was made that she should serve an additional time to make up for any sickness resulting from her peculiar occupation. It is equally notorious that Chinese bravoes can be readily hired at prices which cannot, under the circumstances, be considered as exorbitant, who will undertake to maim, or even kill, any other Chinaman obnoxious to his employer. Murders are constantly occurring, which are clearly traceable to this cause, but although the perpetrators may be well known, they cannot be brought to justice, on account of the prevailing fear that any evidence against them will be visited with severe and speedy punishment.

In my own professional experience, I have repeatedly known cases where a Chinese witness would tell the truth to the attorney in the case, but utterly refuse to state it upon the stand. If he is nevertheless summoned, and called upon to testify in open Court, he avows his utter ignorance of the whole matter.

Prominent Chinese merchants are constantly complaining that a price has been set on their heads, and that their lives are in danger from their own countrymen, and in one case within my own knowledge a Chinese merchant paid a special policeman ten dollars per day for several days prior to the departure of the China steamer, to go about with him continually, and protect him from these hired assassins. Even while he was giving an elaborate supper at a Chinese restaurant to other merchants, he insisted that his guardian should be at the door and within easy call. It was noticeable in this case that the Chinaman was not afraid of any personal attack from his enemy himself, but rather from bravoes employed by that enemy.

But I do not wish to enlarge upon this portion of my subject. I have endeavored to confine myself to facts within my own knowledge, and they can easily be verified. The facts speak for themselves. Summing them all together, they simply amount to this: the Chinaman has brought China to America. Travelers have enabled us to understand what that is.

A population so dense as to be over-crowded, our Mongolian immigrants bring us all the evils of over-crowding. The China-

man in America cannot comprehend that there is plenty of space. He has formed a habit of making himself compact and economizing his room. A hundred Chinamen are quite content in a house not big enough for ten of our own race. Their type of a sleeping chamber is a sardine box. As a consequence, they have developed all the evils engendered by over-crowding and too close personal contact. At home, labor is so plentiful that it has lost some of its value. The struggle to suport life is so hard and so engrossing that it leaves no time to elevate or glorify it. Selfishness rises to a science. Men come to disregard the pains and cares of others. "Individual Altroism" is even more unintelligible to them than it is to us. On the other hand, industry and economy are exalted, because the lack of them means starvation.

There is nothing in their religion or in their education to counteract or ameliorate these tendencies. Their religion is rationalism run to decay. Their education is principally directed to forms and ceremonies. In fact, their civilization is so ancient that it has become rotten.

Thus the Chinaman has brought to us and planted within our border all the vicious practices and evil tendencies of his home, aggravated somewhat, perhaps, by the circumstance that he has lost what little restraint his home government imposed upon him, without submitting to the restraint of ours.

I do not doubt that this condition of things might be very greatly improved by wise and careful legislation, and by steadfast and conscientious teaching. But we are not a nation of teachers, and there are millions of pupils ready to come. In the meantime, the deluge.

Again, assimilation is rendered more difficult in this case by the very fact that the Chinese are in their way a civilized and not a barbarous race. Barbarism is much more easily assimilated to and absorbed in civilization than is a divergent civilization. For the first lesson which the barbarian learns from his contact with civilization is that the civilized man can do more with less materials and in less time than he can himself. He sees that civilization is an advantage. He naturally seeks to acquire it for himself, and in acquiring it, he necessarily assimilates himself more or less to the race from which he learns it.

I never shall forget the time when I first became convinced of the truth of this proposition. Several years ago when the great eclipse of the sun occurred, which you all remember, I was living at Austin in the State of Nevada. I had just come out of my house with a piece of smoked glass in my hand when I noticed a Shoshonee Indian intently looking up into the sky. The day had been very bright. Suddenly an invisible veil seemed to cover the sun; a luminous pall fell upon the mountains and the valleys, softening the rugged outlines of the one and dimming the long distances of the other. Great vague shadows seemed to have dropped down into the cañons and gulches around us, where it had been dazzlingly bright but a moment before. Conscious of some great mystery, but utterly ignorant of its nature, the Indian stood with his eyes searching the cloudless sky. I handed him my bit of smoked glass and motioned to him to look at the sun. He did so, and when I asked him what he thought of it, he heaved a deep sigh and said, "Whitee man heap sabee." Continuing down the street with my bit of smoked glass still in my hand, I happened on a Chinese laundryman. I offered him my smoked glass, and advised him to look at the sun. But John only grinned complacently, and said, "Up my house got heap big tub water; you see 'em 'clip' heap better." I went home and got out my own tub of water and found that John was quite right. I could see the "clip" a heap better. I have always felt that I ought to have passed to John the laurels I had just undeservedly received and said, "Chinaman heap sabee." It seemed to me then, as it seems to me now, that in many branches of knowledge the Chinaman is as far advanced as we are, and it is precisely because he does not need our help that I think him less likely to adopt our ways.

Before leaving this branch of the subject, I desire to put in evidence the history of the Chinese in America, and more particularly in California, during the last twenty-five years. We are all tolerably familiar with it, and it seems to me conclusive on two points.

First—We cannot and will not assimilate with them.

Second—They have not the remotest inclination to assimilate with us.

If, then, we cannot live harmoniously together with the Chinese, the conclusion is sound that Chinese immigration should be prevented.

Of course, it is understood that my argument is not directed against the coming of a few individuals. It is rather against the vast hordes who can be spared there and who are ready to come here. It is not the present thousands of whom we complain. It is the future millions.

But I am met here with the argument that the prohibition of any kind of immigration whatsoever is contrary to the immemorial policy of our republic and in the teeth of the most noble and memorable utterances of our fathers.

I take issue on both points.

It never was the policy of our republic to welcome to our shores a class of immigrants who could not or would not assimilate with our people, nor was it ever so declared.

It did so happen that until the Chinese invasion, the class of immigrants who came to our shores were, with one exception, welcome visitors. They were of races and nationalities with which we were in perfect concord and with whom we could readily assimilate. We needed them; they came, and twenty-five years after they came, almost all evidence of their foreign birth had disappeared. They had become thoroughly assimilated to us, and amalgamated with us, and were as much Americanized as if born on the soil.

But there was one exception. That exception was the African Negro. His coming was bitterly regretted by every one of our early statesmen who ever spoke of it. If you doubt this, examine the list of members of the African Colonization Society. The pages shine with eminent names. But the negro did come, and we just barely survived his coming. Is it worth while to repeat the mistake?

A strange notion seems to have become prevalent in the Eastern States that the opposition to Chinese immigration is mainly based upon the fact that the Chinese are gen-

erally more industrious and economical than ourselves. No less distinguished a writer than George W. Curtis has denounced the movement as a crusade against the two virtues of industry and economy. Perhaps some of the speeches made on this coast may have given color to such an imputation. But its falsity is readily seen when we consider that no one thinks of opposing Scandinavian immigration, although the Scandinavian is, as a general rule, full as industrious and economical as the Chinaman. But the Scandinavian is in sympathy with us. He readily accepts our government, our customs, our habits, and ways of life. In a few years he becomes as much of an American as ourselves, and his devotion to our soil and his attachment to our institutions is as warm as our own.

On the other hand, an immigration of Malay pirates would be full as objectionable as the present Chinese immigration, although the Malays have even less industry and economy than our own people. We want no race which we cannot absorb. Our best immigrants are those whose race distinctions are soonest obliterated.

I do not pretend to claim, however, that the opposition to Chinese immigration is not made more bitter and intense among our laboring classes because the coming of so many Chinese has a tendency to derange our labor market and bring about a reduction in wages. It would be very strange if it did not have this effect. We do not expect that a laborer will look with kindly feelings upon the man who takes the bread out of the mouth of his children, even when that man is his friend or neighbor. It is difficult enough at all times to curb the passions of men, who, while resisting a reduction in their wages, see their places taken by others willing to work for the price they have refused. It was not found an easy task last summer in the Eastern States. But the task is made very much more difficult when the newcomers are unwelcome strangers, alien in race, in color, in creed, in customs, and in everything but the power to work. This presents only another bar to the assimilation of the two races, and excites still other and very bitter and dangerous antagonisms between them. It is no argument to tell the American laborer that if he would live as the Chinaman lives he might subsist on the Chinaman's wages.

It has taken the Chinaman centuries to learn to live on so little. With the lapse of time his necessities have gradually accommodated themselves to his small earnings, until now very little suffices to procure him abundance. He has made a prodigious stride toward the ideal ration of a straw per day. Early education and constant habit have so led him to practice the closest economy, that economy has itself become a habit, and no longer involves self-denial. The world about him has graduated itself down to his standard. His butcher, his baker, his candlestick maker, his manufacturer, his merchant and his common carrier, have reduced their prices to suit his measure. The doctor who attends his sick, and the priest who buries his dead demand little because he gets little. Labor can afford to be cheap when everything else is cheap. But we cannot expect labor to be cheap when everything else is dear.

The Chinaman is what he is because of China; the American is what he is because of America. Under the circumstances there cannot be a fair competition between them. You cannot give the American laborer a long line of Chinese ancestors. You cannot give him hereditary tendencies and tastes, and instincts and capabilities which his birth never entitled him to. You cannot make him over on the Mongolian pattern, and give him a Chinese education.

The truth is, we have taught each other habits that are expensive. We have led each other to believe that it is a good thing to promote schools and educate children, to contribute to churches and give to hospitals, to eat clean food and wear clean clothes. We have encouraged each other to think that overcrowding leads to immorality, that plenty of air and sunlight are necessaries of life, that our old and infirm must be properly cared for and kindly treated. Sickness compels expensive physicians, nurses and medicines, and death brings an expensive funeral. Our habits, customs and system of life are modeled upon this standard, and it is impossible to change it at once. Until it is changed, the Chinaman will always beat us in a competition where the frugal habits he learned in China are pitted against the habits we learned in America. Under the circum-

stances it is no more surprising that a Chinaman can live cheaper than an American than it is that a horse can.

But is it worth while to change our system? While there may be many defects in it, still does it not, upon the whole, work better than any system we know of? Suppose that we had an immigration of 100,000,000 of Chinamen; suppose that their industry and economy were applied to our land and every acre beneficiated to its utmost; suppose that our productions were magnified until the possible height was reached—what then? Measured by acres, we should be much better off than we are now; but, measured by men, should we be any better off? Measured by the peace, prosperity, contentedness, cheerfulness, happiness of our people, should we have made any progress? I think not.

But I am asked how can this immigration be checked? The power to regulate commerce resides in the National Congress. Our Government has made a treaty with China in which the right to come here has been granted to her people. The Supreme Court of the United States has just decided that no State possesses the power of interfering with this immigration. All this is true.

But we have no right to assume that the National Congress will not do us justice. Perhaps their refusal to help us—I do not understand that they have as yet refused—is because they do not yet understand our grievance. There are many among ourselves who are still in favor of Chinese immigration. It has even been asserted, and prominent men and journals in the East have repeated it, that the opposition to Chinese immigration in California is confined to a few demagogues and discontented communists. As long as this is believed, there is little hope of anything being done.

I, therefore, make this suggestion: Let the Legislature of California, at their next session, provide for taking the sense of the people of the State of California on the question of Chinese immigration, at a general election to be held for that purpose. Let them next request the Legislatures of the other Pacific States to adopt a similar measure. I may be mistaken, but I think that

vote would result in a showing of at least ten to one opposed to Chinese immigration.

Then let the Senators and Representatives from the Pacific Coast in Congress, armed with these credentials, say to their brethren of the East: "The people of the Pacific Coast have been so far the only people exposed to Chinese immigration. They are strongly and bitterly opposed to it. This vote is conclusive on that point. They now call upon you for relief. If they are wrong you can easily prove it. The treaty with China provides that the Chinese may enter all our ports, while we are restricted to five of theirs. Make this restriction mutual. Amend the treaty and confine the Chinese to the Atlantic ports If this immigration suits you, you are welcome to it."

The proposal seems to me a fair one.

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